



cattle egret

Bubulcus ibis

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Aves
Order:	Ciconiformes
Family:	Ardeidae

Features

An adult cattle egret is 20 inches long. Both the male and female have white bodies. During the breeding season the male has orange-tan patches on its back, chest, and top of the head. This bird has a yellow bill. The mature bird will have coral-colored legs while others have yellow-green legs. Like the other herons, its neck is held in an "S" formation during flight with its legs trailing straight out behind its body.

Natural History

The cattle egret lives on farms, mudflats, airfields, golf courses, and marshes. It eats mainly insects, especially flies and grasshoppers. It usually is found near cattle and other livestock because they keep insects moving as they feed in the pasture. This bird nests in colonies with other herons. It is aggressive, so it often is more successful at producing young than other herons. It also is better able to adapt to drier conditions. Spring migrants arrive in March. Four or five pale blue eggs are laid in a nest. The cattle egret

is exotic to Iowa. It is native to Europe, Asia, and Africa. It spread naturally to South America in the late 1800s and North America in the mid 1900s. The first cattle egret recorded in Iowa is from 1961. The cattle egret has nested in Iowa only three times.

Habitats

Missouri River; Mississippi River; interior rivers and streams; natural lakes and prairie marshes; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs

Iowa Status

uncommon; exotic

Iowa Range

summer: scattered throughout Iowa in suitable habitats; migrant: statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.